

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A shield apparatus for positioning over a cutting mechanism of a power vegetation trimmer for preventing or at least minimizing contact between vegetative matter and a rotating output shaft of the vegetation trimmer, the cutting mechanism of a type comprising a cutting element location disposed along a transverse axis for positioning of a cutting element, the shield apparatus comprising:
 - (a) a first lateral wall coaxially disposed about a central axis and comprising a radial dimension relative to the central axis;
 - (b) a first transverse shield wall transversely disposed relative to the central axis and adjoining the first lateral wall wherein the first lateral wall extends from the first transverse shield wall in a first direction toward the transverse axis for terminating above the transverse axis of the cutting mechanism, the first transverse shield wall comprising a first aperture coaxially disposed about the central axis to permit extension of an output shaft therethrough, wherein the first lateral wall and the first transverse shield wall define a first interior and are adapted for at least partially overlapping at least a portion of a cutting mechanism within the first interior above ~~[[an]]~~ the external cutting element location; and
 - (c) a second lateral wall coaxially disposed about the central axis on an outer side of the first transverse shield wall opposite to the first interior

and extending away from the first transverse shield wall in a second direction substantially opposite the first direction, the second lateral wall comprising a second radial dimension relative to the central axis less than the first radial dimension and defining a second interior of the shield adapted for at least partially overlapping at least a portion of a head member from which an output shaft can extend.

2. (Original) The shield apparatus according to claim 1 wherein the first transverse shield wall and the first lateral wall cooperatively form a first cup-shaped portion, the first transverse shield wall and the second lateral wall cooperatively form a second cup-shaped portion, and the second cup-shaped portion is inverted relative to the first cup-shaped portion.
3. (Original) The shield apparatus according to claim 1 comprising a second transverse shield wall transversely disposed in relation to the central axis and adjoining the second lateral wall, the second transverse shield wall attached to the outer side of the first transverse shield wall and having a second aperture coaxially disposed about the central axis in general alignment with the first aperture of the first transverse shield wall.
4. (Original) The shield apparatus according to claim 3 comprising an adapter member for mounting to the output shaft of a vegetation trimmer for rotation

therewith and for mounting the shield apparatus in non-contacting relation to the output shaft, the adapter member comprising a hollow cylindrical portion extending through the first and second apertures, a first annular adapter plate coaxially disposed around the hollow cylindrical portion and disposed in the first interior adjacent to the first transverse shield wall, and a second annular adapter plate coaxially disposed around the hollow cylindrical portion and disposed in the second interior adjacent to the second transverse shield wall.

5. (Previously Presented) The shield apparatus according to claim 1 comprising a hollow cylindrical portion disposed in the second interior in alignment with the first aperture for attachment to the output shaft of a vegetation trimmer and for mounting the shield apparatus coaxially about the output shaft.

6-7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The shield apparatus according to claim 5 comprising a coaxial adapter wall coaxially disposed around the cylindrical portion.

9. (Original) The shield apparatus according to claim 1 comprising an adapter member for mounting to the output shaft of a vegetation trimmer for rotation therewith and for mounting the shield apparatus in non-contacting relation to the output shaft, the adapter member comprising a hollow cylindrical portion

extending through the first aperture, a first annular adapter plate coaxially disposed around the cylindrical portion and disposed in the first interior, and a second annular adapter plate coaxially disposed around the cylindrical portion and disposed in the second interior.

10-11. (Canceled)

12. (Currently Amended) A trimmer head assembly for use with a power vegetation trimmer, comprising:

- (a) a head member comprising a proximal head section for attachment to a vegetation trimmer, a distal head section, and a rotatable output shaft extending outwardly from the distal head section along a longitudinal axis ~~[[for]]~~ and rotatably driving a cutting mechanism attached to the output shaft wherein the cutting mechanism comprises a cutting element location disposed along a transverse axis for extension of a cutting element externally from the cutting mechanism; and
- (b) a shield for preventing or at least minimizing contact between vegetative matter and the output shaft and comprising a transverse shield wall transversely disposed relative to the longitudinal axis, and first and second outer walls coaxially disposed about the longitudinal axis, wherein the first outer wall extends from the transverse shield wall in a direction toward the transverse axis and terminating above the

transverse axis while circumscribing ~~circumscribes~~, above the cutting element location, at least a portion of the cutting mechanism by a distal annular gap, and the second outer wall circumscribes at least a portion of the distal head section by a proximal annular gap.

13. (Original) The trimmer head assembly according to claim 12 wherein the shield comprises a transverse shield wall adjoining the first outer wall and having an aperture, and the output shaft extends through the aperture.
14. (Original) The trimmer head assembly according to claim 13 wherein the shield comprises an adapter member disposed in the first aperture in contact with the output shaft.
15. (Canceled)
16. (Original) The trimmer head assembly according to claim 12 wherein the shield comprises a first transverse shield wall adjoining the first outer wall and having a first aperture, the output shaft extends through the first aperture, and the second outer wall extends from the first transverse shield wall.
- 17-22. (Canceled)

23. (Currently Amended) A trimmer assembly for use with a power vegetation trimmer, the trimmer assembly comprising:

- (a) a head member comprising a proximal head section for attachment to a vegetation trimmer, a distal head section, and a rotatable output shaft extending outwardly from the distal head section;
- (b) a cutting mechanism attached to the output shaft and rotatable therewith, the cutting mechanism having a cutting element location disposed along a transverse axis for extension of a cutting element externally from the cutting mechanism; and
- (c) a shield disposed around the output shaft between the distal head section and the cutting mechanism, the shield comprising:
 - (i) a first lateral wall coaxially disposed about the output shaft and overlapping at least a proximal region of the cutting mechanism above the cutting element location;
 - (ii) a first transverse shield wall adjoining and extending from the first lateral wall toward the output shaft, the first lateral wall extending from the first transverse shield wall in a direction toward the transverse axis and terminating above the transverse axis; and
 - (iii) a second lateral wall coaxially disposed about the output shaft and extending on an opposite side of the first transverse shield

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wall from the first lateral wall, the second lateral wall overlapping at least a portion of the distal head section.

24-29. (Canceled)

30. (Previously Presented) The trimmer assembly according to claim 23 wherein the shield defines a proximal annular gap between the second lateral wall and the distal head section.

31-41. (Canceled)